

# Safe Oahu Response Plan

On September 23, 2021, the City and County of Honolulu (“**City**”) implemented a four-tiered plan to reduce the spread of COVID-19, with criteria set for loosening and tightening restrictions on businesses and activities (“**Original Framework**”). After COVID-19 vaccines became available, the City adopted a new tiered plan on June 10, 2021 tied to the percentage of the State population that has been fully vaccinated (“**Vaccine Framework**”). After the Vaccine Framework was implemented, due to the highly contagious Delta variant, the City, along with the rest of the state and large portions of the country, suffered another wave of COVID-19 infections that has severely strained our healthcare system, statistically associated with the hospitalization of unvaccinated individuals who contracted COVID-19.

While the Original Framework and the Vaccine Framework provided some measure of predictability to businesses and citizens, at this stage of the COVID-19 pandemic it is clear that a rigid tier system lacks the flexibility necessary to best combat and mitigate the transmission of this disease.

Accordingly, the Vaccine Framework will be replaced with this Safe Oahu Response Plan (“**Response Plan**”) outlined below. The Response Plan is intended to inform the public of the following:

- City’s overall goals;
- the principal metrics considered by the City in responding to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic; and
- the risk factors and characteristics of activities, businesses, and operations that the City considers when evaluating the potential loosening and tightening of restrictions.

## Goals

This Response Plan is based on increased knowledge of, and about, disease transmission, vulnerability, risk factors, community compliance, access and administration of COVID-19 vaccines, the impact of COVID-19 variants, effective treatment options, current risk of COVID-19 related hospitalizations, and healthcare system capacity. The Response Plan is purposefully flexible to enable the City to respond to the ever changing COVID-19 pandemic, and is driven by the following three goals:

- Protect the public health and our healthcare system;
- Allow businesses to operate safely and day-to-day life to continue safely; and
- Provide simple, clear, and consistent orders for the public to follow;

## **Metrics**

The Response Plan will be guided by consideration of metrics that have historically guided the City's response to the pandemic, including reported COVID-19 cases per day (which informs projected hospitalizations), COVID-19 case positivity rate, percentage of fully vaccinated people, healthcare system capacity (including hospitalizations, ICU beds, ventilators, staffing, etc.), all with consideration of the economic impact of imposed restrictions.

However, the loosening and tightening of restrictions will no longer be tied to one or two rigid metrics. Instead, the City, in consultation with healthcare professionals, including the State of Hawai'i Department of Health (and with consideration of current CDC guidelines), will loosen and tighten restrictions as appropriate from time to time based on all of the available metrics and the current circumstances. The tightening of restrictions in particular will be for defined periods of time, in the hopes that such actions will have a positive impact on the guiding metrics and the restrictions will be in place as briefly as is necessary to ensure good public health and safety.

These changes will generally be consistent with the City's movement through the prior tier system (the Original Framework) in that riskier businesses and activities will be allowed to open and operate when deemed relatively safe to do so. In addition, the categories of designated businesses and operations will generally remain the same to promote consistency and predictability.

## **Risk Factors**

Activities, businesses and operations will be allowed to operate (with mitigation measures) under the proclamation and orders using the risk factors below. Generally speaking, when the metrics are trending poorly, those activities, businesses and operations with a higher risk of spreading COVID-19 are more likely to be restricted than those with a lower risk of spreading.

Criteria used to determine low/medium/high risk activities, businesses, and operations:

- Ability to accommodate wearing face coverings at all times
- Ability to physically distance between individuals from different households
- Ability to limit the number of people per square foot
- Ability to limit duration of exposure
- Ability to limit amount of mixing of people from differing households and communities
- Ability to limit amount of physical interactions of visitors/patrons
- Ability to optimize ventilation (e.g. indoor vs outdoor, air exchange and filtration)
- Ability to limit activities that are known to cause increased spread (e.g. singing, shouting, heavy breathing; loud environs that cause people to raise voice)
- Possibility/existence of vaccine/testing requirements
- Ability to enforce restrictions and require mitigation measures

## The Framework applied to the current situation

Effective immediately, the City will operate under this new Response Plan and issue a Proclamation and Order that sets the emergency period and implements COVID-19 related restrictions during the identified emergency period. At this stage, most businesses and activities are allowed subject to limitations on group sizes, capacity, face covering requirements, physical distancing requirements, and/or vaccine/testing requirements (for some high risk activities). However, our healthcare system's capacity is still strained. Depending on community compliance with the existing protocols and increase in vaccination counts (full and partial), the City will either implement further restrictions, or maintain the current ones (with the goal of loosening restrictions as permitted in the near future).

## Vaccinations are still our best weapon to combat COVID-19

The City developed this Response Plan to better adapt to changing circumstances and to guide the public during these unprecedented and uncertain times. As with any government plan, it will only succeed with general acceptance and public support. There is no doubt COVID-19 has upset existing social norms and practices and adaptation has been challenging. Nevertheless, Hawai'i continues to lead the nation in its response to COVID-19. Now we must make the final push and ensure everyone who can get vaccinated, does so. The sooner this happens, the sooner we can lift all restrictions and restore our economy, businesses and the quality of lives on Oahu.

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RICK BLANGIARDI  
Mayor  
City and County of Honolulu

APPROVED:



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